

Introduction to Latter-day Saint Church Records

U.S. and Canada Research Specialists

Objective

- Identify, locate, and access unique records pertaining to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
 - Ward Membership Records
 - Immigration and Emigration Records
 - Early Church Information File (ECIF)
 - Journal History
 - Church Census Records
 - Missionary Records

Membership Records

Ward records

LDS Membership Records are available from 1830 to the present. They include records of names, birthplace, birth date, names of parents, spouses, and children, baptisms and confirmations, blessings of babies, marriages, deaths, priesthood ordinations, tithes and offerings, and movement in and out of wards. The Family History Library has membership records through 1948. The Church History Library has additional membership records for 1949–1983. The earliest official LDS Church membership records from 1830–1870 were kept in bound books of plain paper provided by the clerk himself. Information that was recorded could include baptisms and confirmations, blessings of babies, marriages, deaths, Priesthood ordinations, tithes and offerings, and emigrants. Most of the early records are not indexed and not all of them have survived.

Since 1877, the Church has prepared printed books to record membership information. *The Long Book*, which was about four feet wide (long) when opened, was used from 1877–1900. In the 1870s many members were rebaptized to renew their covenants. The long book format was created to record these rebaptisms and reconfirmations. These records were indexed and included the following information: name; birth date and place; parents' names; date of baptism, confirmation, rebaptism, reconfirmation, Priesthood ordinations; date the person was received into and removed from the ward; death date; and remarks.

From 1900–1920, a three-part form was used. Part I recorded baptized members and gave each member's name, birth date and place, parents' names, date of baptism and confirmation, and by whom performed, membership record numbers, and remarks, which often include arrival, removal, and death. Part II recorded Priesthood ordinations and included the name, date of ordination, to what office, by whom, and reference to the membership number where this person could be found in part I, and remarks. Part III recorded children who had not yet been baptized. It listed the name of the child, date and place of birth, parents' names, date of blessing and by whom blessed, and remarks.

From 1920–1941 the box type of form was used. Four to six boxes were printed on each page. The index in the front showed the number assigned to the box rather than being a page number. Each box had a space for the member's name, sex, date and place of birth, parents' names, dates of blessing, baptism, and confirmation and by who performed, dates of Priesthood ordinations and office, and by whom performed, date of death, arrivals and removals, spouse's name, marriage date and place, and type of ceremony.

Starting in 1941, each member's record was kept on an individual card. When a member left the ward, the card was returned to Church headquarters and then, upon request, sent to the member's new Church unit. These records are not available for research. If the member died, however, the card was placed in the *Deceased Members File* (see below).

For records from the mid-1940s to the 1980s, the records are housed in the Church History Library. Since the early 1980s the ward records have been kept by the Church membership department. To view your membership record, contact your ward clerk.

The Church began using the forms in the *Annual Reports E or Form 42FP (1907–1983)* in 1907 and kept them concurrently with the membership records. These forms only include entries about people who were blessed, baptized, ordained to Priesthood offices, sent or returned from missions, married, divorced, or died during the year. Form E was used by stakes and Form 42FP was used in the mission field. Form 42FP included yearly sections for members who immigrated to Zion and full-time missionaries who worked in the area during the years from 1911–1962. You must search the *Annual Genealogical Reports* year by year because they are not indexed. In the FamilySearch Catalog, do a "keyword" search, typing in "annual report form e."

Deceased Members File

Since 1941, when a church member dies, the ward clerk sends the person's membership record to the Presiding Bishop's Office, where it is placed in the *Deceased Members File*. The Membership Department keeps these records for ten years. After ten years the Membership Department transfers the names to the Church History Library.

If the person died between 1941 and 1988, search the microfilms entitled *Deceased Membership Records, 1941 to 1988* at the Family History Library. These films are not circulated to Family History Centers and photocopies are not allowed. However, you may transcribe the information by hand. The microfilms are also available at the Church History Library.

If the person died after 1988 and the Church has proof of the person's death, the Membership Department will provide birth, marriage, baptism, and ordination information.

The Historian's Office record of members, also known as the "Minnie Margetts" file or *The Membership Card Index*, includes most (but not all) early English branch records from 1839–1913, arranged alphabetically by surname (women may be listed under their maiden or married names). Cards may provide the person's name, date and place of birth, parents' names, date and place of baptism, by whom baptized, Priesthood ordinations, residence, emigration, and remarks. Film no. 415443 gives a list of the branches indexed, which include a few church units outside of England.

Wiki Articles about Church Membership Records

- “Membership Records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Membership_Records_of_The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints
- “Records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Records_of_The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints
- “Latter-day Saint Vital Records”
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Vital_Records
- “Ward Membership Records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ward_Membership_Records_of_The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints
- “Census Records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Census_Records_of_The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints

Immigration and Emigration Records

In the early years of the Church, all members were exhorted to gather to Zion. Records of those who immigrated may contain births, marriages, and deaths that occurred during the migration. (Note: Migration of LDS immigrants from Europe began as early as 1840, when the gospel was first preached there, and lasted to the early 1900s.)

Migration

Early Church Information File indexes many LDS migration sources:

- *Worldwide LDS Ship Register (1840-1913)*
<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS87-S7ZB-C?mode=g&cat=474641>
- *Mormons on the High Seas: Ocean Voyage Narratives to America (1840-1890)*
<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS87-S7DF-W?mode=g&cat=594310>
- *Mormon Pioneer Companies Crossing the Plains (1847-1868)*
<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS87-S7DF-W?mode=g&cat=594278>
- *Deseret Morning News Church Almanac*
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/results?count=20&query=%2Btitle%3ADeseret%20%2Btitle%3Aorning%20%2Btitle%3Anews%20%2Btitle%3Achurch%20%2Btitle%3Aalmanac>
- *Ships, Saints, And Mariners: A Maritime Encyclopedia of Mormon Migration, 1830-1890* / by Conway B. Sonne; foreword by Leonard J. Arrington. Family History Library call no. 973 W2ss. Also available through the Salt Lake County Library System.
- *Mormon Migration Database (1840-1932)* includes passenger lists, general information about the voyage to America, and journals kept by various individuals during the voyage.
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2365248>

Pioneer Trek

- *Mormon Pioneer Companies Crossing the Plains (1847-1868)*

- <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS87-S7DF-W?mode=g&cat=594278>
Index to the Deseret News Weekly 1850–1900, by Andrew Jenson. This indexes several immigrant rosters not available elsewhere. The full citation is in *Latter-day Saint Newspapers*. Available to view online at Family History Centers.
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/film/007858988?cat=260979>
- *Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel* database, which gives rosters for the various companies coming west, as well as journal entries and newspaper articles the give details of the individual treks. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2517340>

Perpetual Emigration Fund (PEF), 1849 – 1887

Many church members borrowed money from the PEF for emigration. Related records include ledgers, promissory notes, lists of indebtedness, etc. Notations in records may list all family members' names who emigrated and sporadically other important information such as death date or place of residence. There are a few of these records at the Family History Library, but most of them are kept at the Church History Library. The following indexes have been digitized:

- *Names of persons and sureties indebted to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company from 1850 to 1877 inclusive*
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/21320?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
- *Utah, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Church History Library, Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company financial accounts: COLLECTION RECORD, 1849-1886*
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/3535185>

Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah

This publication has been digitized and can be found at FamilySearch.org. You can also view the digitized version the California Digital Library. This book has thousands of pictures and biographies of male pioneers.

<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/237967-redirection>

Daughters of Utah Pioneers

This organization has gathered about 100,000 pioneer histories and thousands of photos, and copies of these histories and photos are available. It is easy to search the history card index and the photograph index online. The main DUP museum is located at 300 North Main Street, Salt Lake City, Utah, and there are DUP museums and organizations scattered in towns throughout Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Wyoming with valuable information and artifacts. <http://dupinternational.org/>

The National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers also keeps histories of pioneers at their website.
<https://www.sup1847.com/>

Pioneer Women of Faith and Fortitude, by the International Society Daughters of Utah Pioneers, is a four-volume set filled with thousands of pictures and biographies of female pioneers. A set of this work can be found at the Family History Library, call no. 979 D36p.

Wiki Article about Emigration and Immigration

- Latter-day Saint Emigration and Immigration
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Emigration_and_Immigration

Early Church Information File

The *Early Church Information File* is an alphabetical index of individuals containing about 1,500,000 entries from over 1,200 sources about Latter-day Saints and their neighbors. It quickly identifies useful sources, identifies possible family connections, helps find birth, marriage, and death information, finds the names of an ancestor's relatives, locates individuals in specific geographical area, and contains useful biographical information.

The *Early Church Information File* has been digitized and can be browsed at FamilySearch.org. The direct link is: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2078505>. The digitized record is divided into alphabetical groups and is easy to search.

Several major indexes are referenced in the *Early Church Information File*. Some of these sources include:

- *Mormons and Their Neighbors* (digitized version at BYU Harold Lee Library Digital Collections): <https://lib.byu.edu/collections/mormons-and-their-neighbors/>
- *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies*
Online index: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2078505>
- *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1830-1848)* available online at Ancestry.com: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5333/>
- *Mormon Manuscripts to 1846*
Online index: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2078505>
- *Genealogical Surveys of LDS members: Autobiographies and Ancestors* (34 volumes, at FHL).
Links to digital copies of each volume:
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/55034?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

The sources covered in the *Early Church Information File* are from the 1830s to the middle 1900s and include records of Latter-day Saint membership; ward, family, and local histories; journals; biographies; priesthood and missionary records; periodicals; cemetery records; immigration records; and western states marriages.

It does not include every name mentioned in all sources about Latter-day Saints, every membership record, or information on living people. It does not include every large LDS index such as the *Scandinavian LDS Mission Index*, the *Obituary Card Index*, the *Journal History*, the *Membership Card Index*, or the *Patriarchal Blessing Index*.

Journal History

The Church History Library houses the *Journal History of The Church*, compiled by Andrew Jenson, a day-by-day history of the Church from 1830 to present day taken mostly from newspapers, but also from some minutes and diary entries. It is arranged by date, with the page numbers restarting with each date. It contains valuable historical and biographical data. It may contain information about when a pioneer arrived in Utah, when a bishop was called, or when a ward or stake was organized. The index to the *Journal History* can be accessed here:

<https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/training/journal-history-of-the-church/journal-history-of-the-church?lang=eng>

Additional Wiki Articles

- Tracing Latter-day Saint Ancestors:

- https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Tracing_Latter-day_Saint_Ancestors
- Latter-day Saint Online Genealogy Records:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Online_Genealogy_Records
- Latter-day Saint Record Finder:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Record_Finder
- Latter-day Saint Directories:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Directories
- Latter-day Saint Military Records:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Military_Records
- Latter-day Saint Newspapers:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Newspapers
- Latter-day Saint Obituaries:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Latter-day_Saint_Obituaries

Church census records

Searching the church censuses is one of the easiest ways to locate an ancestor's ward or branch and what time period they lived at that location. This can help in locating the family's church records and other types of historical records.

In the winter of 1852–1853, the bishops of Utah took a type of church census. Although it is incomplete, this record names the head of each family alphabetically and lists which ward they attended. It is indexed in the *Early Church Information File* and has been digitized. This record, entitled the *Registry of Names of Persons Residing in the Various Wards as to Bishops' Reports, 1852-1853*, can be accessed here: <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/572990-registry-of-names-of-persons-residing-in-the-various-wards-as-to-bishop-s-reports-1852-1853?offset=1>

The Church took censuses to track members and church growth throughout the world. The first church-wide census was taken in 1914. Beginning in 1920, the Church took a census every five years until 1960, except 1945 (due to World War II). These census records were compiled into 651 microfilms and labeled *Church Census Records, 1914-1950*. They are arranged alphabetically by the name of the head of the household. There is a supplement for cards sent in late.

The 1914, 1920, 1925, 1930 and 1935 church censuses were microfilmed together and can be found on films 025708–245307 and supplemental films 367404–367412. The information for each of these years included every family in a ward or branch and each person in the household, including their gender, age, Priesthood office, and marital status.

In addition to the basic information, the 1914 church census shows the geographical region where each person was born; the family's address; the name of the ward or branch, stake, or mission the person attended; and date of the census.

The 1920 church census added the maiden name of married women, the year of birth of each person, and the church auxiliaries each person attended.

The 1925 church census included the complete birth date and the columns for auxiliaries were deleted.

The 1930 church census added the exact place of birth. Cards for Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and parts of Maryland also provide the baptism date and place and the name of the person who performed the baptism.

The 1935 church census added the previous ward or branch the family attended.

The 1940 church census, found on films 367353–367400 (including supplemental) and missions on films 245308–245313, added the family's previous street address and the date when the family moved to their present address.

No church census was taken in 1945 because of World War II.

The 1950 church census is on films 271409–380122. The 1955 and 1960 church censuses were microfilmed together on films 427814–471656. These censuses show the same information as the 1940 census.

If you cannot find a family on a church census, try looking for variant spellings of the surname, for the wife as the head of household, and check the supplemental films. Be aware that some church units did not participate, and the census taker may have missed the family.

LDS Church Censuses, 1914-1960																							
Census Year	Parents Names	Father's Name	Mother's Maiden Name	Children's Names - Oldest First	Sex (Male or Female)	Priesthood ¹ , Member, Child	Age	When Born (Day, Month, Year)	Where Born	Where Born (City or Town/State or Country)	Social Relation ²	Branch/Ward Record Number	If On Record or Certificate Applied For	Enrolled In ³	Branch/Ward	Stake/Mission	Date Taken	Family Name/Surname	Address	Census Taken By	Checked with Ward Record by	Where Previously of Record	Moved to Present Address
1914	X			X	X	X	X		X ⁴		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
1920		X	X	X	X	X		X	X ⁵		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
1925		X	X	X	X	X		X	X ⁵		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
1930		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
1935		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
1940		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1945	No Census Taken																						
1950		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1955		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1960		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<div><div>¹ High Priests, Seventies, Elders, Priests, Teachers, Deacons</div><div>² Single, Married, Divorced, Widower, Widow, Unknown</div><div>³ Relief Society, Sunday School, Y.M.M.I.A., Y.L.M.I.A., Primary, Religion Class</div><div>⁴ Utah, America, Europe, Asia, Islands of Pacific, Unclassified</div><div>⁵ North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australasia, Pacific Islands, Elsewhere</div></div>																							

Missionary Records

Missionary records provide information about a member's missionary service. They also provide some genealogical information.

The *Missionary Record Index, 1830-1971*, is available at the Family History Library on films 1913079–1913102. Information in the film index includes name of missionary, birth date and place, parents' names, home ward and stake, date set apart, name of person performing setting apart, mission, reference to missionary records, and sometimes release date.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/show?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

Early Mormon Missionaries is a database hosted by the Church History Library that documents those Latter-day Saints who served missions from 1830 to the early 20th century.

<https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/landing/missionary-database?lang=eng>

Wiki Article about Missionary Records

- Missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Missionaries_of_The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints

Other Resources

Historical geography for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The following resources give background information about LDS ward and stakes, to help find where your LDS ancestor resided so LDS Church records for that location can be found and searched.

- Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church*, a searchable version at BYU Harold Lee Library Digital Collections: <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/BYUIBooks/id/2694>. This book gives the creation dates and boundaries of LDS ward and stakes through 1930 and original settlement names along with brief histories of the early wards and branches. It covers Utah and the mountain west in great detail, and other places in a more general way. It is indexed in the *Early Church Information File*.
- Jill Anderson Ward, *LDS Place Names Gazetteer*, Family History Library book 289.3 W213L or film 1059499, item 5. Many obsolete ward and branch names are given with their new names in this book which includes many references not found in the *Encyclopedic History of the Church*. Digital version: <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/659936-redirection>
- Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*. <http://abish.byui.edu/specialCollections/famhist/churchchron.cfm>. This book lists the establishment dates of new wards.
- Laureen R. Jaussi and Gloria D. Chaston, *Register of Genealogical Society Call Numbers* (2 volumes, call no. 979.2258 A3j v1). Volume I contains call numbers for gazetteers and maps, international genealogical index (IGI) supplements, family group records and pedigree charts, and Volume II (979.2258 A3j v2) contains reference books, indexes, biographical records, vital records, and film numbers of LDS church records of membership.

Periodicals

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has published periodicals since 1832. These serials often contain notices of births, deaths, and removals of families. Periodicals also provide obituaries, biographical sketches, and historical information that may help you in your family history research. Most Church periodicals are available in the Church History Library.

The periodicals that are indexed in Early Church Information File have been digitized by BYU Digital Collections—Mormon Publications: 19th and 20th Centuries.

- Evening and Morning Star (1832 – 1833, MO) (1833 – 1834, OH)
<https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28104>
- Messenger and Advocate (1834 – 1837, OH)
<https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/7160>
- Times and Seasons (1839 – 1846, IL)
<https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/9373>
- Millennial Star (1840 – 1970, England)
<https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/150>
- Digital Collections Index
<https://lib.byu.edu/collections/digital/>